

Today's Readings

Isaiah 9:2-4
 Psalm 27:1, 4abc
 1 Corinthians 1:10-13, 17
 Matthew 4:17-23

Prepare the Meeting Space

In the worship area, on a table draped with a green cloth, place:

- a Lectionary
- a battery-operated candle
- a festive houseplant or bouquet of fresh flowers

For use during the Gathering activity, place on a stand in the middle of a large vacant area nearby:

- a small but beautiful object, such as a snow globe, concealed with a cloth

For use during the Homily, have these items ready:

- a baby doll
- a flask of water
- a large white candle to represent the Easter candle
- a small white candle to represent a baptismal candle
- a rectangular white cloth with a hole cut in the middle to fit over the doll's head to represent a baptismal garment
- a small dish of vegetable oil to represent baptismal oil

Suggested Music

See page 62 for more information.

GATHERING:

"Hello Jesus" (Seeds VOL.-2, Track #18) or **"Come and Follow Me"** (Promise & Good News VOL.-2, Track #26)

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION:

"Alleluia" (Promise & Good News VOL.-2, Track #24)

Jesus Calls the First Apostles

PREPARATION

Children's Leaflet

Have on hand copies of the Children's Leaflet for this Sunday. Distribute copies either at the start of the session or before the children return to the assembly.



PREPARE WITH PRAYER

My heart tells me to pray. I am eager to see your face, so don't hide from me. I am your servant, and you have helped me. Teach me to follow, Lord, and lead me on the right path.

(PSALM 27:8, 9, 11)

Scripture Background

The immediate historical context of today's First Reading is the period of peace that followed Assyria's war on Israel, the northern part of the divided Jewish kingdom, in approximately 722 BC. In a broader sense, this passage speaks of the everlasting light and peace that the messianic king will one day bring all his people.

In the Second Reading, Paul writes to the Corinthians in response to reports he has heard about a growing division among them. Evidently, the Christian community in Corinth is in a squabble about which preacher's particular "brand" of Christianity is best—that of Apollo, Cephas, Paul, or Christ.

Real differences did exist among these factions. Apollo's admirers appreciated his polished classical rhetoric; those of Cephas, his strict interpretation of Christianity with respect to its roots in Jewish law; and those of Paul, the power of his direct, unadorned rhetoric.

Finally, those claiming loyalty to Christ alone were probably ultra-spiritualists who believed they could connect directly with Christ without any apostolic leader or mediator. Paul boldly declares all of them in the wrong when he asks, "Has Christ been divided up?" (1:13)

Although Peter, Andrew, James, and John would not have used the word *Church* to describe themselves the day they answered Jesus' call,

Read the proclamation for Sunday of the Word of God: <http://bit.ly/41LheiZ>

it nonetheless was the day our Lord began gathering together the stones that would form the foundation of his Church.

The fishermen's only understanding at the time, however, was that they were leaving behind their old lives to become disciples of a brilliant new teacher who was proclaiming, "The kingdom of heaven will soon be here" (Matthew 4:17). Only over time would they gain life-changing insight into the exact nature of this announcement.

CHILDREN'S CONNECTIONS

By age five, children are old enough to begin understanding the significance of Baptism. They can grasp the basic notion that through Baptism a person is welcomed into the family of God, the Church.

Kindergartners like doing things together in groups, can follow simple instructions, and are capable of learning from activities that involve role playing. While they enjoy fantasy play of all kinds, they nonetheless remain capable of distinguishing between real life and games of "Let's Pretend."

For all of these reasons, it is suggested that you demonstrate how an infant Baptism is performed for today's Homily. Familiarize yourself with the Order of Baptism. Go online to <http://bit.ly/47MrVo5> and read the rite.

You won't have time for a complete reenactment. In your role-playing, therefore, focus on these parts of the rite:

- the opening exchange between priest and parents, priest and godparents
- the rite of pouring holy water on the child's head three times while speaking the baptismal formula
- the rite of anointing the child's forehead with oil
- the placement of a white garment on the child
- a family member's lighting of the baptismal candle with the large Easter candle (Don't use real fire to light the candles.)

After finishing the demonstration, tell the children that there are other recitations, prayers, songs, and readings

in a complete baptismal service, but that today you just wanted them to see how its main symbols are used.

THE CHILDREN'S LEAFLET

The Children's Leaflet for this week helps children learn about the call of Peter, Andrew, James, and John, through a prayer, a summary of the Gospel, and a creative activity.

If you distribute the leaflet now and time permits, you may wish to read with the children the summary of the Gospel in "The Word of God This Week" after you have read the Gospel. Point out the artwork and ask the children what is happening in the picture.

More About ...

The Kingdom of God

In his Gospel, Matthew usually writes "kingdom of heaven" instead of "kingdom of God." This usage unfortunately causes many to identify the Kingdom of God with the everlasting reward of those who die in Christ. That view, however, is too limited. It is more accurate to understand that wherever there are people—whether in Heaven or on earth—who have let Christ into their lives, there his kingdom is.

Although sometimes the terms *realm* or *reign* are used as synonyms for *kingdom*, Scripture scholar John L. McKenzie cautions that the most theologically accurate word remains *kingdom*, the one found in most Bible translations.

Realm is less desirable because it suggests a specific geographic location, and *reign*, because it suggests a specific era. *Kingdom*, on the other hand, can apply to a spiritual reality that exists both in space and time and beyond them, centered as it is in an everlasting king—Christ Jesus.

Leaflet Activity

While taking a walk this week, families discuss what it means to follow someone. The children's activity involves footprints and ways of following Jesus. The solution is shown here for your convenience.



LITURGY OF THE WORD

Gathering

Standing near the covered object on the table, ask the children to join hands and form a large circle around you. Then ask them to step backward and stretch as far apart as they can while still holding hands. Tell them they must stay where they are standing until you tell them they may move. Let them release their hands, and ask if anyone wants to guess what is hidden under the cloth. Take a few answers, and then remove the cloth.

Ask children from each of the four directions to tell what they see from where they are standing. Ask if they would like to get a closer look. When someone says yes, let everyone move forward three steps as you count out loud, "1-2-3." Ask what they could see better by moving closer. Keep doing this until the group is standing as close together as they can without crowding each other.

Finally, invite the group to move eight to ten steps to the right, then report what they see that's different. When you have finished discussing the object, thank the children for sharing their observations. Then discuss these points: (1) moving closer helped them see better; (2) hearing others helped them know it better; (3) the closer they got to the object, the closer they got to each other; (4) these same things are true every time we, the Church, gather around Christ for the liturgy.

Ask the children to go to the worship area and be seated for the Collect.

Collect

LEADER: Please bow your heads for prayer. At the end of each prayer, repeat, "Lord, have mercy."

Lord Jesus, you called us into your Church the day we were baptized. Lord, have mercy.

CHILDREN: Lord, have mercy.

LEADER: Lord Jesus, you come to us today through your Word and sacrament. Lord, have mercy.

CHILDREN: Lord, have mercy.

LEADER: Lord Jesus, through today's liturgy you draw us closer to yourself and closer to one another. Lord, have mercy.

CHILDREN: Lord, have mercy.

Light the candle for the First Reading.

First Reading

LEADER: In today's First Reading, Isaiah talks about all that God has done for us by calling us to himself and making us his people.

Read Isaiah 9:2-4.

LEADER: The word of the Lord.

CHILDREN: Thanks be to God.

Responsorial Psalm

Before beginning the psalm, announce the response.

LEADER: The Lord is my light and my salvation.

CHILDREN: The Lord is my light and my salvation.

LEADER: Read Psalm 27:1, 4abc.

Second Reading

LEADER: In today's Second Reading, Saint Paul writes to some Christians who have started arguing with one another.

Read 1 Corinthians 1:10-13, 17.

LEADER: The word of the Lord.

CHILDREN: Thanks be to God.

Gospel Acclamation

Invite the children to stand. Sing the suggested Acclamation or another familiar one. If you choose not to sing the Gospel Acclamation, proceed to the proclamation of the Gospel.

Proclaim the Gospel

LEADER: Just as our lives with Christ began the day we were baptized, the Apostles' lives with Christ began the day they started following him. Today's Gospel tells about how this happened for Peter, Andrew, James, and John.

The Lord be with you.

CHILDREN: And with your Spirit.

LEADER: A reading from the Gospel of Matthew.

CHILDREN: † Glory to you, O Lord.

LEADER: Read Matthew 4:17-23. Then say, "The Gospel of the Lord."

CHILDREN: Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

Homily

Ask if the children have any questions. Answer them and then base a short talk on the following ideas:

- Ask the group: Don't you suppose these four Apostles remembered for the rest of their lives the day that Jesus called them?
- Continue: You had a day equally special in your lives, too, but you were probably so little when it happened that you don't remember it. Through a priest, Christ asked you to follow him, and your parents and your godparents stepped forward to say "yes" on your behalf. Because they loved you, they wanted you to belong to Christ and receive his blessings without any waiting.
- Ask if they would like to participate in a pretend baptism, just to see what happened the day they became members of God's family. Choose four of the older boys and girls to be the parents and godparents, and proceed as explained in Children's Connections.

Profession of Faith

LEADER: Please stand for the Profession of Faith. Today we will use the same words that were part of your baptismal ceremony when you were little. Respond to each question with the words, "I do." Do you believe in God, the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth?

CHILDREN: I do.

LEADER: Do you believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son

our Lord, who was born of the Virgin Mary, was crucified, died, and was buried, rose from the dead and is now seated at the right hand of the Father?

CHILDREN: I do.

LEADER: Do you believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and life everlasting?

CHILDREN: I do.

Prayer of the Faithful

LEADER: In union with Christ and each other, let us present our needs to the Heavenly Father. Our response to each petition will be, "Hear us, O Lord."

CHILDREN: Hear us, O Lord.

LEADER: That all followers of Christ will work for the unity he wants of his Church, we pray.

CHILDREN: Hear us, O Lord.

LEADER: That the people of our parish will answer Christ's call every day of their lives, we pray.

CHILDREN: Hear us, O Lord.

LEADER: That the Church will bring Christ's healing power to everyone suffering from every kind of disease and sickness, we pray.

CHILDREN: Hear us, O Lord.

LEADER: Invite the children to pray their own petitions. Then pray:

Heavenly Father, today we have answered Christ's call to come together in thanks and praise for your many favors. One day in Heaven may we come together again with the Apostles and with all the saints to celebrate your love forever and ever.

CHILDREN: Amen.

Return to Assembly

The Liturgy of the Word ends with the Prayer of the Faithful. Prepare the children to return to the assembly in a respectful manner. If you haven't already done so, distribute the leaflets. Remind the children to take the leaflets home and share them with their families. Encourage them to watch this week's Gospel Reflection video and complete the Family Corner activities as a family..